

# STAFF REPORT



**To:** Council  
**From:** Adam Dedrick, Director of Recreation & Parks  
**Approved by:** Trudy Payne, Chief Administrative Officer  
**Date:** October 13, 2020  
**Subject:** Community Rinks Assistance Resolution

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## Origin

The Municipality of Pictou County recently approved a resolution and sent correspondence to Premier Stephen McNeil requesting the provincial government to consider providing financial assistance to community rinks due to the negative financial impacts of COVID-19. They circulated this information with other municipal units to gather support where appropriate.

## Recommendation:

That Council approve the following resolution:

WHEREAS Community Rinks are a vital part of the recreational infrastructure in small towns and rural areas; and  
WHEREAS Community Rinks provide opportunities for walking tracks, recreational skating, and hockey at all levels; and  
WHEREAS Community rinks often run on a very tight budget with much volunteer donated labour; and  
WHEREAS if Community Rinks close, they may never reopen; and  
WHEREAS the restrictions placed by the Public Health Authorities to help control the spread of COVID-19 are significantly impacting the business operations of community rinks causing deficits.  
THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED that the Municipality of the District of Shelburne call upon the government of the Province of Nova Scotia to bring forward a program of support to help Community Rinks survive the 2020-2021 season.  
And furthermore, send a letter to Premier Stephen McNeil requesting the provincial government consider providing financial assistance to community rinks due to the negative impacts of COVID-19.

## Background

As a result of COVID-19 many community rinks/arenas are facing the challenge of trying to balance the expense of new protocols, the potential decrease in the number of large user groups and a reluctance by the public to put themselves at risk in these environments. There is a real risk that rinks will not be viable for the 2020-2021 season. To see them through the season, rinks will need some measure of financial relief.

## Discussion

Our local rink, the Shelburne County Arena, is in this same position as other small town arenas throughout the province. Already facing a shortfall in operational funding for the upcoming season, the potential negative impacts of COVID-19 puts even more strain on the financial situation of the arena. Any financial assistance from the Province to help not only our arena, but all struggling community arenas, would be extremely beneficial.

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To support a unified call upon the provincial government, it is recommended that Council send a letter to Premier Stephen McNeil that includes the attached resolution outlining the request for the Province to consider providing financial assistance to community rinks due to the negative impacts of COVID-19.

**Budget Implications**

None.

**Attachments**

- Letter to Premier from Municipality of Pictou County
- Resolution passed by Council of Municipality of Pictou County

Administration/C.A.O.  
Administration Building  
45 Municipal Drive, Pictou  
Phone: (902) 485-4311  
Fax: (902) 485-8475



Building Inspection: (902) 485-4588  
By-Law Enforcement: (902) 485-8840  
Fire Inspection: (902) 485-8360  
GIS/Civic Addressing: (902) 485-1201  
Public Works: (902) 485-4085  
Recreation: (902) 485-8528  
Fax: (902) 485-8475

# Municipality of Pictou County

P.O. BOX 910, PICTOU, N.S.  
B0K 1H0  
All Offices: (902) 752-1530

October 7, 2020

Honourable Stephen McNeil, Premier  
Province of Nova Scotia  
PO Box 726  
Halifax, NS  
B3J 2T3

Dear Premier McNeil:

As Nova Scotians navigate their way through COVID-19 we are all striving for the flexibility and adaptability we need to maintain some semblance of normalcy. This has been particularly difficult for non-profits and community-based organizations who struggle at the best of times to attract volunteers, fundraise, and operate at a break-even point. Community rinks fall in the latter category and they are the subject of this correspondence.

At the time the Pandemic was defined in the spring, rinks were basically at the end of their operating season and saw very little negative financial impact. With fall upon us they are valiantly trying to cope to balance the expense of COVID protocols, a decrease in the number of larger user groups, and a reluctance by the public to put themselves at risk in these environments. From a purely business perspective there is a real risk that rinks will not be viable for the 2020/21 season and a worry that users will not return to rinks in the numbers the facilities are accustomed to and designed to serve. My own Municipal Council believes that this is not a situation unique to Pictou County and we are urging Government to consider the plight of community rinks and provide some measure of financial relief that will see them through the current season.

Enclosed you will find a copy of a resolution passed by Municipal Council earlier this week which captures the essence of our request. We urge Government to look favorable on a program that will support rink operations during this tenuous period.

Yours truly,

Brian Cullen  
Chief Administrative Officer

/cm  
p.c. NS Municipalities

## **RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS Community Rinks are a vital part of the recreational infrastructure in small towns and rural areas; and**

**WHEREAS Community Rinks provide opportunities for walking tracks, recreational skating, figure skating and hockey at all levels; and**

**WHEREAS Community Rinks often run on a very tight budget with much volunteer donated labour; and**

**WHEREAS if Community Rinks close, they may never reopen; and**

**WHEREAS the restrictions placed by the Public Health Authorities to help control the spread of COVID -19 are significantly impacting the business operations of community rinks causing deficits.**

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Municipal Council for the Municipality of the County of Pictou call upon the government of the Province of Nova Scotia to bring forward a program of support to help Community Rinks survive the 2020-2021 season.**

**DATED at Caribou, NS this 5<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2020.**